Subject : Counterstamped West Indian gold coins

Note Rubbing of Coin # 2 is MIA.

Whetmore, S.

[London, England]

1928

/

CHISWICK 1723.

29, FIELDING ROAD,
BEDFORD PARK,
London W.4.
England.

July 10th 1928

Dear Sir

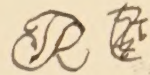
I have four gold countermarked coins in my collection about which I am anxious to obtain further information. Experience of this class of coin in England is not very great, I think, and, although I have studied your book, I should be grateful, if I am not troubling you too much, for your opinion on the information I send you herewith

Coin I weighs 160·8 grains troy diameter 30·5 millimetres A Joao of Josephus I of 1771 (Joseph I). The head seems to correspond exactly with that of Fig 63 in your book. The coin is unplugged & has, as countermarks, 20 over an eagle and E&D in an oval. I enclose a

[margin note: Markinspoon 1805]

1798 ED

rubbing. The countermarks seem to be right when compared with those you illustrate but I am surprised at the absence of a plug (the weight is very light) & to finding Martinique & Demarara marks on the same coin

Coin II. Weight 180 grains troy, diameter 28.5 millimetres. A Joao of Mary I and Peter II of 1786. The heads, so far as I can judge, are not the same but are very closely on the lines of your figure 56. The coin is plugged & the plug is stamped  or T.R. The coin has not been flattened after plugging & the obverse is, in consequence, so convex that I cannot get a satisfactory rubbing. The coin is countermarked "G" three times near the edge

Coin III. Weight 177.6 grains diameter 31 millimetres. A Joao of Joseph I of 1771. The head is the same as your figure 63. The coin is plugged but the plug is not stamped. The coin has not been flattened but

It is not too convex to prevent taking a rubbing which I enclose. The coin is countermarked 20 over an eagle & "G" three times near the edge. Are Martinique & Grenada together likely?

Coin IV. Weight 180 grains diameter 30.5 millimetres a Joao of Joseph I of 1771. The head is as your figure 63. The coin is plugged & the plug is stamped IWP. The coin has been flattened & I enclose a rubbing. It is countermarked "G" three times near the edge. The coin is illustrated in Sotheby's sale catalogue of 8th May 1928 [Lot 660].

There is another coin, not in my possession but with a dealer, about which I should value your opinion. It weighs 186.2 grains & is illustrated in Glendinings catalogue of the Peltzer collection of June 20th 1927 [Lot 655]. It seems so odd I have never bought it

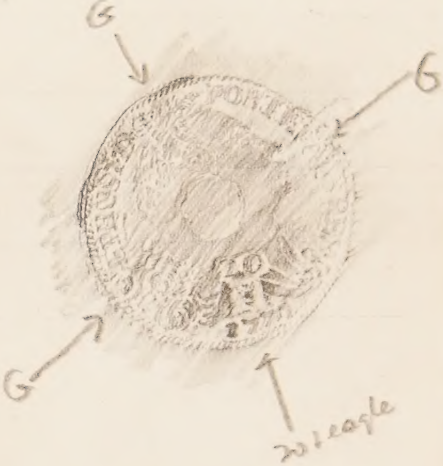
What, if I may ask, do you think of these coins

Yours faithfully

S. Whetmore

I

III



IV

27th Sept., 1928

Mr. S. Whetmore,
29, Fielding Road,
London, W. 4, England

Dear Sir:

Please pardon the delay in answering your letter of July 10th concerning certain counterstamped West Indian gold coins. The fact is, I have been away nearly all summer.

Your coin No. I with E and D and 20 over an eagle is certainly to my mind a counterstamp for both Demerara of 1798 and Martinique of 1805. Quite a proportion of these gold coins seem to bear the marks of more than one island. Gold certainly circulated around about more than silver and far more than copper, and those islands that stamped the gold apparently were particular to stamp the new pieces that came on the island. Some with the 20 counterstamp were for Demerara, but I have always considered the Demerara stamp as the one without the eagle.

Gold coins were not necessarily plugged; only in those islands where their monetary standards were different than the Portuguese gold or to rectify light-weight pieces.

I can not help out on your No. II. Sometimes they left these coins quite badly dented after putting in the plug, but for the most part they seem to have tried to flatten them out. There is very little actual knowledge about these gold pieces. My own theory is that the marks on the plugs do not indicate the island but are simply the initials of the man responsible for the plug; because when this plugging was first done counterfeiters got busy and put in copper plugs and then plated them. The G has always been assigned to Grenada, but the Grenada pieces usually have an I W on the plug, as on your No. IV. I consider your No. III for both Grenada and Martinique. The mere fact that your No. I and your No. III have the 20 over eagle counterstamp shows to my mind that the 20 counterstamp belongs to neither Grenada nor Demerara. We often find gold pieces stamped with either a 20 or 22 over eagle and no other counterstamp. I got two of these a few years ago from a small island not far from Martinique.

Your No. IV is like most specimens that I have seen, three G's around each and I W on the plug. I have never heard of these being done in any island but Grenada. The other coin with the number of counterstamps in the Peltzer Sale is all right. It certainly had traveled about the different islands. I have no idea what some of these marks mean. I noticed this piece in Seaby's last price list.

I can not find my notes now, but I know I have never seen this piece, but I think I have noted some pieces with about as many counterstamps.

I know I have not helped you very much, but the fact is no one seems to know as much as they should about the West Indian counterstamped coins.

Very truly yours,

Curator